

Selectboard Meeting Minutes

Monday, September 10, 2018 at 7pm at the Calais Town Offices

Present: Denise Wheeler (Chair), Rose Pelchuck (Member), Sharon Winn Fannon (Member), Clif Emmons (Member), Katie Lane-Karnas (Recording Secretary), Jerome Lipani, Meg Dawkins, Rick Kehne, Scott Bassage, Toby Talbot, Sandra Ferver, Dorothy Naylor, Scott Thompson

Absent: John Brabant (Vice Chair)

1. Call to Order: Denise Wheeler called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm.
2. Public Comment: None.
3. Review, Additions/Changes to Agenda: None.
4. Updates/Reports (as needed or requested)
 - a) Road Commissioner and Operations Manager
 - i) Request for naming a private road: The Chair reported the Perennial Fields project requested approval of their private road name ("Perennial Field Ln. PVT"); Meg Dawkins attended representing the project. The Chair reported that the Town buys the sign and installs it; the project should be aware that the Selectboard is currently working on creating a private road name sign policy, which may include the private road owner having the responsibility to pay for any replacement sign that is needed. Clif Emmons moved to approve the private road name, and Rose Pelchuck seconded. The Board and Meg Dawkins discussed exactly how many letters would permit the sign to be short enough in length to only require a single post. Meg Dawkins requested returning to the Board after speaking with her group about the impact of the length of the private road name. The Operations Manager will let Meg Dawkins know how many letters will fit on a sign requiring only a single post. Clif Emmons withdrew the motion. [Selectboard member Sharon Winn Fannon recused herself from the Perennial Fields topic and discussion.]
 - ii) Truck lease options: The Operations Manager and Selectboard discussed extended engine warranty and truck coverage options. The Operations Manager will check whether the extended warranty is transferable (in the case of resale) and get back to the Board. The Board also discussed a five-year versus seven-year lease, ownership as an option, and yearly combined equipment debt. The Operations Manager commented that the five-year lease may be a stronger capital plan option, so that there will be less interest as well as fewer truck payments stacked up at the same time. He and the Board discussed their intent to keep the truck for seven years. The Chair asked the Operations Manager whether he is aware of any other capital plan expenses that the Highway Department will be requesting in upcoming budget planning for FY 20, and he responded that he is not. He also reported that the repaired truck is running well now, that Calais owns four large trucks and one 1-ton. Scott Bassage inquired how much the

Town would save if the “extra” or fifth truck was sold. The Operations Manager commented on the historic advantage to the Town to have the “extra” truck for use when one truck is out of commission. Scott Bassage commented that the Town must annually set aside the replacement value of a fifth truck; Rick Kehne commented on the need for equipment to use when one truck is out of service. Scott Bassage commented that this truck will eventually be replaced, and there is therefore no such thing as a cheap dump truck, and questioned its worth to the Town. Discussion included that the extra truck is a 2009 and well beyond its seven-year life and gets limited use. The Operations Manager reported that while a truck can be hired for hauling gravel in summer, the Town could not rent a plow truck during winter, and that Calais has 73 miles of town road, a much higher number than in other towns. The Board discussed their preference for the levels of extended warranty, and the Operations Manager was assigned to gather the quotes for the five-year lease from the vendors.

- b) Treasurer: The Town Treasurer reported that the Town is in receipt of the draft of the FY17 audit; the findings will be discussed with the auditors at a future date (the draft contains only numbers but not recommendations for office practices). The FY18 audit will be done in the next week, at which point the Selectboard can anticipate scheduling with the auditors to interpret the audits and consider potential areas for developing strong practices going forward, including development of the highway fund balance (aiming to make it predictable and alleviate conversations between the Town Treasurer, Selectboard and Highway Department as to what those numbers really mean). The Board stated their preference for the auditors to speak to the full Board about both audits, preferably on September 24. The conversation at that meeting will provide the opportunity to understand the Financial position of the Town through an auditor’s lens, conveyed as to a lay person. The Town Treasurer commented on looking ahead to the scheduling the FY19 audit.

The Town Treasurer guided a review of the new NEMRC budget format and related it to the former Quickbooks format. She outlined areas for the Board to consider in their approach to budget development, and suggested a schedule so the final proposed budget is complete well in advance of January 22 (as driven by deadlines defined in statute). The Chair will create a budget planning schedule and will present it to the Board and Town Treasurer. The Board will consider who to utilize for graphic design of the Town Report. The Board will charge Town commissions with presenting their budgets level-funded with 2019 budgets, and to provide thoughtful explanation why any areas of increase may be requested.

- c) Town Clerk: This item was not needed.
 - d) Town Hall Renovation Committee: Scott Bassage reported that the Town Hall will be back on its foundation on Thursday.
5. Act 46 update: Scott Thompson, Rick Kehne and Dorothy Naylor attended to update the Board regarding issues related to Act 46. They discussed a potential lawsuit and “litigation hold” letter from an attorney working with some of the groups opposed to the forced merger of local school boards. They reported that if it went to trial it could cost up to \$50,000, and school

districts and municipalities could decide if they want to contribute. Each town, U-32 and the WCSU central office could contribute funds; it has been estimated that it may cost \$2-3,000 per town that joins. There is a meeting on 9/26 for all the towns to meet to vote to be part of this legal battle. The Selectboard, Scott Thompson, Rick Kehne and Dorothy Naylor discussed the budget implications of consolidations, including the pooling of assets and debt, with the debt becoming \$150,000 more per year, for 14 years (this being the duration of East Montpelier's debt). They are also looking at the possibility of options that would allow Calais to avoid taking on the other towns' debt; they report that all the options are messy and uncertain of success. If the Town takes control of the asset, the school building, the Town will accept responsibility for what is currently the Supervisory Union's (SU) responsibility. Another option is that Calais' taxes would rise to East Montpelier's level, but the district would pay Calais reimbursement by raising taxes (this would be accomplished through an agreement within Washington Central Supervisory Union, WCSU). There is a possibility that a legal team will put enough pressure that the consolidation would be postponed until after the November election, allowing voters to elect legislators supporting their positions.

The Boards and guests discussed how towns that consolidated took incentive money they were offered from the education fund, which all taxpayers statewide pay for, but only consolidated towns are eligible for the payment; so the fund is shifting revenue away from non-consolidating towns. They discussed ways Act 46 and the resulting unpredictable school budget planning may complicate things for this year's Town Meeting. There is currently \$200,000 in the school's capital fund, which the school board is discussing spending to zero in the case of consolidation. The Chair inquired about the SU budget, noting the Superintendent salary is \$125,000 plus benefits. They discussed the relationship between the school boards association and the superintendents' association. If the mergers are accomplished, the school district would own the Town's school building. WCSU is talking with Twinfield and Cabot about opportunities for partnering and reported that there are many. The litigation hold will be discussed on 9/26, and they hope school boards will vote to join. The Calais Selectboard had created and signed a resolution in support of the Calais Elementary School Board's efforts to resist Act 46. They discussed support for the rule of law issue, as defined from the merger issue, at the CES and the U-32 Board. Sharon Winn Fannon commented that once residents have been taxed, even if there is somehow a circling back and refund, how to move that money back to taxpayers' pockets is a very messy issue. They considered the downsides that towns who are regretting having merged are now discovering. Calais and Worcester have been receiving a Small Schools Grant, which is being turned into an incentive for towns who merge. They commented on the silence of the teachers regarding this issue, and noted the teachers are in a difficult place to comment given their jobs would be through the supervisory union. The Boards expressed their sincere appreciation for each other's work in support of CES remaining a local school. On an unrelated note, the Boards decided to continue to consider the fast trash and compost location potentially being held, at least as a trial, at the school.

6. "Draft" road naming policy: This item was tabled until a subsequent meeting.
7. Chair update, projects, etc.:
 - The Chair reported that a joint meeting with Cemetery Commission, the Town Attorney and a representative of the Poplar Cemetery (which is currently privately owned, but the association is dissolving) is needed. A meeting will be scheduled.

- The Chair also reported that there will be a meeting on 9/18/2018 at the Adamant Coop with the Planning Commission and interested residents, to consider zoning changes considering the Shoreland Overlay District.
 - Clif Emmons and Denise Wheeler continue to meet regularly with staff and are considering procedures around office keys and access to those keys.
 - Clif Emmons reported on his research into an office multi-line phone system. He is exploring options and costs for multiple lines; staff have expressed their commitment to residents speaking to a person when they call the Town Office.
 - Jay Copping has agreed to serve as the Town Health Officer.
 - The Chair previewed several items to be addressed at the next meeting, including a draft credit card policy, road crew job description revisions and work on the personnel policy draft.
8. Review and approve minutes, warrants
- a) The Board reviewed the invoices and orders were processed for payment.
 - b) Rose Pelchuck moved and Sharon Winn Fannon seconded to approve the minutes of the 8/27/2018 meeting, as amended; the motion passed 4-0.
9. Executive Session for Personnel Matters: Denise Wheeler made a motion to go into Executive Session at 9:17 pm per 1 V.S.A. subsection 313 (a) (3), personnel matters. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 4-0. The Board resumed Regular Session at 9:57 pm. The Chair reported that the Selectboard reviewed the annual evaluation for a town employee. Sharon Winn Fannon will not be available to sign and therefore authorized the Chair to sign the evaluation on her behalf.
10. Adjournment: Rose Pelchuck made a motion to adjourn at 9:58 pm. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 4-0.

Date: 9/10/2018 Respectfully Submitted, Katie Lane-Karnas, Recording Secretary
Approved by the Selectboard at the 9/24/18 meeting

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https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Zxi_n-5yXQjTBOBICR1NF3zDk4yNC__F